

**View Tucson as Act of Terrorism** Jesse Jackson, Jr.

Politico The appropriate response to last weekend's shooting in Arizona depends in large part on how we define it. If we choose to view the events in Tucson as the act of a lone lunatic, the American people will respond accordingly. If we choose to define it as an act of terrorism, the American people have quite a different response.

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln was part of a conspiracy to kill several prominent national figures. The shootings of President John F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy were the acts of lone, deranged gunmen.

Larger scale attacks on innocent people, like the Oklahoma City bombing and the 9/11 attacks, cause deep emotional wounds on the entire nation, and lead our government to pause and consider how to respond.

The Tucson shooting was carried out by an apparently mentally ill gunman. My colleague, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.), the intended target of this assassination attempt, is an officer of the U.S. Constitution. Therefore an attack on Giffords in the performance of her duty is an attack on the United States.

Since Tucson, the media, liberals and conservatives have driven the conversation into two schools of thought. Conservatives, shying away from a conversation about guns, have focused on the assailant's mental illness. Liberals, conceding the assailant's mental illness, have turned to its tried-and-true gun law agenda.

However, from the shooting of Lincoln to the events in Tucson, there is a thread that liberals and conservatives have ignored. Each event traumatized our government and disrupted its business — and was carried out by anti-government activists. And that's terror.

People who want to improve our country, people who want to build a more perfect union are generally non-violent and peaceful. Generally, they seek to change the conscience of the nation through peaceful and reasonable means.

Elections, not life-threatening political assassinations, are the goal of those of us who seek positive, rational change — no matter what side of the political spectrum they're on. Throughout

history, anti-government activists tend to take up arms against the government and its officials.

Dec. 20, 1860, the South Carolina fire-eater Louis Wigfall was joined by aggressive Virginia secessionists, Edmund Ruffin and Roger Pryor, who promoted an idea to strengthen the resolve of anti-government activists.

“The shedding of blood,” wrote Ruffin, “will serve to change many voters in the hesitating states, from the submission or procrastinating ranks, to the zealous for immediate succession.”

If you want to join us, Pryor told the Charlestonians, “Strike a blow!”

From Fort Sumter in the Civil War to John Wilkes Booth, to Lee Harvey Oswald, to James Earl Ray, to the assailant in Arizona, violence has all too often been the legacy of anti-government crusaders. It is not new, but it is terrorism just the same.

On the other hand, people who want to make the country better also acknowledge that gun violence is not the path to a more perfect union. Only peaceful, non-violent discourse can bring about the community of love and shared destiny that we desire.

Members of Congress have been traumatized by the shooting in Tucson. Some are now arming themselves and their district staffs; others are proposing legislation that has far-reaching implications for our constituents and their access to members of Congress.

I am working on a proposal to restore the recent 5 percent cut in member budgets, because in this economic climate, we should be providing more services to our constituents — not less. On top of that, I will propose an increase in funding to the House Sergeant at Arms, so that appropriate precautions for district offices, staffs and events can be taken.

In some districts, that is likely to mean hiring security personnel for public events. In other areas, that may mean installing surveillance cameras at district offices as a deterrent, or improving the locks or the entry systems. Some are likely to need more resources to move their offices to a safer area.

I do not feel that fear should grip us. But since 9/11, we’ve secured every federal facility domestically and around the world with the exception of our district offices. After the shooting last Saturday, it is clear that our district staffs are vulnerable. Congress members should have the resources and latitude to take appropriate security measures to protect themselves and their staffs.

The war on terror is not just about foreign extremists. In our country, terror has a varied face — and that face includes Booth, Oswald, Ray, Sirhan Sirhan, Ted Kaczynski, Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols, the 9/11 conspirators and Jared Lee Loughner.

Our “home-grown” terrorists have come from the ranks of the anti-government movement. However, the effect is the same. As such, we owe it to those who work in our district offices to respond thoughtfully, and to ensure that resources are available to keep them as safe as possible.

We should do everything we can to protect the lives of those who serve, and prevent violent interruptions to our government that stop us from peacefully creating a more perfect union.

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